Roosevelt Building
9 North Illinois Street
Indianapolis
Marion County
Indiana

HABS No. IN-215

HABS
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49-IND,
38-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
MID-ATLANTIC REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

THE ROOSEVELT BUILDING HABS No. IN-215

Location: 9 North Illinois Street
Indianapolis, Marion County, Indiana

USGS Indianapolis West, Indiana Quadrangle
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
16.572980.4401100

Present Owner: City of Indianapolis
Department of Metropolitan Development
148 East Market Street
Indianapolis, Indiana

Present Occupant and Use: Vacant

Significance: The Roosevelt Building is the work of one of Indianapolis' most famous, prolific and creative architectural firms, Vonnegut, Bohn & Mueller. Founded in 1888 as Vonnegut & Bohn and later included engineer O.N. Mueller, this local firm designed residential commercial, industrial and institutional buildings throughout the city of Indianapolis. The Roosevelt Building was designed and constructed in 1922. It is one of a series of skyscrapers constructed in post-Victorian downtown Indianapolis, clad with the popular architectural material of terra cotta. With the classical ornamental vocabulary and Chicago Commercial Style verticality, the tall, narrow Roosevelt Building has contributed to the urban character and fabric of the Indianapolis downtown.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: The Roosevelt Building was constructed in 1922 and completed on January 1, 1923 ("Nineteen Large Buildings in Three Years," Indianapolis News, March 16, 1925).

2. Architects: The Indianapolis architectural firm of Vonnegut, 8ohn & Mueller designed the Roosevelt Building. The firm was formed in 1911 when Otto Nicholas Mueller joined the established Indianapolis architectural firm of Vonnegut and Bohn. This firm was founded in Indianapolis in 1888 by Bernard Vonnegut and Arthur Bohn. Vonnegut (1855-1908) was born in Indianapolis of German-immigrant parents and studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and the Polytechnic Institute of Hannover, Germany ("Bernard Vonnegut Claimed by Oeath," Indianapolis Star, August 8, 1908, p.1). Bohn (1861-1948) was born in Louisville, Kentucky of German-immigrant parents and studied architecture in the Royal Polytechnic Institute in Karlsruhe, Germany (Jacob P. Dunn, Indiana and Indianans, Chicago: American Historical Society, 1919, IV:1796). Kurt Vonnegut, Sr. (1884-1956) succeeded his father Bernard in the firm. Kurt also attended MIT and was awarded both bachelor's and master's degrees there, after which he studied a year at the Technical Institute in Berlin, Germany (Kurt Vonnegut, Retired Architect, Dies at 71," Indianapolis News, October 1, 1956). Mueller was a native of Indianapolis and graduated from Purdue University with degrees in mechanical and civil engineering. Mueller remained with the firm until 1937 ("O.N. Mueller," Indianapolis News, November 13, 1958, p.25, c.1). Numerous examples of the firm's work are located throughout the Indianapolis area including Das Deutsche Haus-Athenaeum (HABS No. IN-63), Ayres' and 8lock's department stores, Selig Dry Goods Company Building, John Herron Art Institute, Crown Hill Cemetery Porter's Lodge (HABS No. IN-57) and the Schnull & Company Building (HABS No. IN-219).

3. Original and subsequent owners: The Roosevelt Building was originally built for and owned by the Libby Realty Company on land leased from the Millard Realty Company. In 1921 Libby Realty agreed to construct "a modern building, substantially fireproof and not less than ten stories in height, according to the plans and specifications to be submitted to and approved by the lessor" ("Rise In Value of Roosevelt Site Has Been Great," Indianapolis Star, February 27, 1927).

The Millard Realty Company leased the property from owner Edward F. Claypool in 1907 for a term of 99 years. In 1955 the Millard Realty Company purchased "an undivided half interest in the land on which the Roosevelt Building stands" ("Firm Buys Half Interest in Downtown Building Site," Indianapolis Star, January 8, 1955, p.13). Claypool heirs continued to own interest in the the property until 1981 when the owner of record was simply the Roosevelt Building Company. In 1984 Joan and John A. Hillenbrand II purchased the property, selling it the following year to Si-Roose, Inc., a subsidiary of Melvin Simon & Associates. That same year, the City of Indianapolis, Department of Metropolitan Development purchased the property (Marion County Recorder's Office).

4. Builder Contractor: The name of the Roosevelt Building's builder is unknown.

5. Original Plans and Construction: Blue-line prints of the original, 1922 construction plans for the Roosevelt Building and the 1949 remodeling plans are in the possessions of the architectural firm of Browning, Day, Mullins, Dierdorf of Indianapolis. The construction drawing prints include elevations, floor plans, foundation plans, framing plans, roof plans and column schedule. The name of the firm of Vonnegut, Bohn & Mueller, 610 Indiana Trust Building, Indianapolis, Indiana is printed on elevation and floor plan drawings for the Roosevelt Building (Commission #927). However, the sheets bearing foundation, heating, ventilation, plumbing, electrical and framing plans display not the above named firm, but the names of two of the principals Arthur Bohn, architect and O.N.Mueller, engineer, listed at the same address as above. Comparing the drawings to the actual building and to historic photographs, proves that the Roosevelt Building was constructed as designed. A 1925 article in the Indianapolis News stated that the value of the Roosevelt Building "is said to be approximately $600,000." The article also described the division of uses with "the first four floors....given over to mercantile establishments with offices in the upper eight stories" ("Nineteen Large Buildings in Three Years," March 16, 1925).

6. Alterations and additions: As evidenced in the drawings and specifications in the possession of Browning Day Mullins Dierdorf, Indianapolis architect Edward D. Pierre was the architect of the remodeling of first floor of the Roosevelt Building. Drawings for the "Alterations for Lobby of Roosevelt Building" are dated August 30, 1948 and revised on November 22, 1948. The document entitled "Construction Specifications for Remodeling of the Entrance and First Floor Lobby of the Roosevelt Building," dated January 21, 1949

specifies the use of "Pink Etowah Georgia Exterior Marble" for the exterior framing of the entrance and the same marble, interior type, for the lobby interior. The stainless steel ceiling, door frames, elevator doors and building sign are specified for the remodeled lobby, updating it in the International Style. The collection of drawings also includes some 1950s and 1960s remodeling floorplans for office suites on the upper floors. Materials used in the remodeling of the hallways and offices suggest that the last remodeling occurred in the late 1960s or early 1970s.

B. Historical Context

The Roosevelt Building was constructed in 1922 as a speculative office building for the Libby Realty Company of Chicago. This company was incorporated by Chicago investors and local financier J.J. Kiser. The building was one of a series of post-Victorian skyscrapers erected in downtown and specifically it was part of the 1920s downtown building boom. This interwar period produced many office buildings in the downtown before it was terminated by the Great Depression. It is presumed that the building was named after U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt, whose vice president was Charles W. Fairbanks of Indianapolis.

Located at an intersection in the heart of the downtown, the Roosevelt Building is one block from Monument Circle, the very center of the Mile Square, the original 1821 plan of the city of Indianapolis. The Roosevelt Building is located on the northeast corner of West Washington and North Illinois Streets. Washington Street (the National Road, U.S. 40) has served as the major business street since its founding. Illinois Street, one block west of Meridian Street, was historically heavily traveled because it connected Union Station (two blocks south) to the National Road and the heart of the commercial, business and civic center.

The Roosevelt Building was one of several large Indianapolis commercial buildings designed by Vonnegut, Bohn & Mueller with terra-cotta cladding. Other surviving examples include the 1911 and 1934-36 William H. Block Company Department Store (one-half block to the northwest), the 1924 Selig's Dry Goods Company Building (one-half block to the east) and the 1915 Kahn Building (one block to the east). Terra cotta was popular with both designers and clients as a light-weight, building cladding material in the two decades before the Great Depression. The local firm of Rubush and Hunter designed the Occidential Building (HABS No. IN-211), a speculative office building across the street. This corner building also with two terra-cotta faces, functioned with commercial space below and office space in the upper floors. The Roosevelt Building's last tenants vacated the building in 1989.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: The Roosevelt Building is a twelve-story, office and retail commercial building built in 1922. The Roosevelt Building was intact and unaltered until 1949 when attempts began to update the building through atlerations. Alterations continued until the 1970s as office space was reconfigured and original materials and surfaces were removed or covered up. The exterior has remained intact above the first floor, though it has suffered some deterioration. The building is horizontally divided into four sections. The first floor base is divided into storefront bays. No remnants of the original materials and design have survived. Originally the storefronts had segmented arched transoms above the storefronts. The segmented arches echoed those on the twelfth floor windows. The bays of second, third and fourth floors are unified by a cast-iron window and spandrel framing unit. The fourth and fifth floors are separated by a decorative band of spandrels and cartouches. The upper body of the building extends from the fifth through eleventh floors. The body section emphasizes the building's verticality with continuous terra-cotta mullions separating each bay into two windows with green terra-cotta spandrels recessed from the piers. The building's crown level encompases the twelfth and attic floors and is separated from the body by a decorated spandrel band. The high, ornamented parapet emphasizes the building's verticality with the absence of a cornice and the extension of the decorated piers above the parapet line, implying battlements.

2. Condition of fabric: The exterior terra cotta cladding appears to be in poor condition, sustaining many cracks and attempts to repair cracks. The interior has been extensively remodeled and is deteriorated.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: The Roosevelt Building is a twelve-story office building occupying the entire parcel of land measuring 120 feet long and thirty feet wide. The main (west) facade is eight bays wide and the south facade is divided into two bays. The Roosevelt has a basement and sub-basement, both of which extend under the North Illinois Street sidewalk fifteen feet and under West Washington Street by ten feet. Above the twelfth floor and below the roof is a full-length maintenance and mechanical attic with no windows on the main elevations. The attic is lighted by windows on the secondary elevations.

2. Foundations: The poured concrete foundations do not have an exterior exposure.

3. Walls:

a. South and west elevations: The Roosevelt Building's two principal facades are the west elevation on Illinois Street and the south elevation on Washington Street. The Washington Street facade is two bays wide and the Illinois Street side is eight bays. Both are twelve stories in height with light-gray, terra cotta facades, backed up by both brick and clay tile units. The first floor has a variety of storefronts, signage, and fascia, resulting from several remodeling campaigns. The second through fourth floors have metal spandrel and window units with groups of three windows in each bay. The fifth through twelfth floors have two wood windows in each bay with a terra cotta mullion between them. The attic level is clad with terra cotta and has no openings. The expression of the piers is made with moulded terra cotta carried from top to bottom.

b. North and east elevations: The north elevation facing the alley and the east elevation are brick-faced and express thirteen stories through the fenestration. The north elevation is two bays wide and the east is eight. The north elevation has one window in the west bay and a window and door in the east. The door leads to an exterior, metal fire escape which runs from second through the twelfth floors. At first floor level are two service doors. The east elevation typically has four windows on the fifth through twelfth floors. At the twelfth and thirteenth floor the terra cotta and windows wrap the south corner through the south bay. The penthouse is also clad in brick.

4. Structural systems: The structural system is steel frame with the primary steel beams encased in concrete. The floors are concrete slab and joist construction. The foundation walls are concrete (Centre Venture, "Building Descriptions of Circle Centre Mall," Indianapolis, Indiana, February 8, 1988, rev. July 15, 1988; typewritten unpublished).

5. Openings:

   a. Doorways and doors: The first floor is pierced by the main entrance and by individual storefront entrances on the western and southern elevations. The north elevation is pierced by two service doors. The main entrance is located as it was originally in the fourth bay from the north end of the west elevation. The existing entrance with marble framing, and stainless steel framed doors dates from the 1949 remodeling. Storefronts to the north and south and on the south elevation display entrances dating from post-World-War-Two remodeling campaigns, all glass doors with aluminum sash. The north elevation is pierced by doors at all levels from the first through twelfth floors serving the exterior fire escape system on this facade. These glazed doors are clad with sheet metal.

   b. Windows: Two different fenestration patterns are found on the Roosevelt Building above the first floor of the terra-cotta faced south and west elevations. Floors two, three and four have a four-part, steel-sash window composition in each bay, consisting of a fixed center sash window flanked by two, smaller, center-pivoting windows. Above these three windows are three, operable, hopper-type, wood-sash, transom windows. On floors five through twelve each bay has a pair of wood-sash, double-hung, one-over-one lighted windows.

      The north elevation is divided into three bays, the center and western bay have double-hung, hollow-steel sash with three-over-three lights, one exception is at the attic level where the windows are three-quarters-sized. The window of the east elevation are similar to those of the north elevation. This elevation is pierced by four vertical rows of windows serving the corridors, elevator shafts and the commom stairwell of all floors from the fourth to the twelfth floors. Three of these rows have hollow-metal sash, double-hung, three-over-three-lighted windows. The northern-most row has three-lighted, hollow-metal sash windows that pivot on center. The twelfth floor also has a pair of wood, frame windows identical to the south and west

elevations, enframed by the terra-cotta return, one bay in length. The attic level has four, three-quarter-sized double hung windows. The penthouse also has the metal-sash, center pivoting windows.

6. Roof: The ornate parapet frames the flat roof. The red brick penthouse provide room and shelter for the elevator machinery and rises approximately eleven feet above the roof.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: The floors were originally divided into offices corresponding to the bays of the main (west) facade, permitting eight offices per floor. The 1922 plans indicate that some of the offices were internally subdivided into smaller office spaces. The drawings indicate that the office walls were of makolite and some of the subdivided areas have wood-paneling partitions. The corridor extended from the second bay to the seventh bay along the east wall, providing access to the three elevators, stairway and all offices. Floors fifth and sixth have large (16'-10" x 14'-10") toilet rooms in the northeast corner. Floors seventh through twelfth have small (5'-0 x 14'-10") toilet rooms in the northeast corner. The drawings indicate more irregular office configurations with office suites three bays wide in the top two floors.

2. Stairways: The principal stairway is located on the east wall, north of the elevator shaft, and connects the first twelve floors and the attic floor. This stairway is of steel construction with exposed steel stringers and risers; terrazzo fills the treads and landings. The exception to this is at the first to second floor run where marble is used to face and fill the stair components. A steel stair connects the basement to the alley Court Street. A concrete filled metal pan stair connects the basement and sub-basement. A steel stair connects the first-floor lobby and the basement and a concrete stair to the sub-basement. A concrete filled metal pan stair along the south half of the east wall connect the first floor to the basement. A stair connects the first floor to the mezzanine; construction is unknow. A concrete stair connects the basement and sub-basement along the east wall (Centre Venture).

3. Flooring: All flooring on floors two through twelve originally had wooden flooring over the concrete sub-floors. All flooring at these levels has been covered over by carpeting, llnoleum or vinyl floor covering. The original terrazzo corridor floors have remained intact. The original marble floor of the first-floor elevator lobby has survived. The floors of the first floor shops are covered with carpeting. Bare concrete floors are found in the attic, basement and sub-basement levels.

4. Wall and celling finishes: With the exception of a few offices, no original surface finishes have survived or are unexposed on the first through twelfth floors. All other wall surfaces at these levels have been covered over with tile, plywood paneling and east ceilings are covered by suspended ceilings. The unfinished brick and concrete surfaces are unaltered at the attic, basement and sub-basement levels.

5. Openings:

   a. Doorways and doors: In the first through twelfth floors, most of the doors and doorways have been removed or remodeled during attempts to update the office and commercial spaces only a few origlnal paneled wooden doors have survived remodeling campaigns.

   b. Windows: All exterlor windows have survived on all levels, second through attic, nearly all of these windows have survived with their simple framing trim intact.

6. Decorative features and trim: With the exception of the stairwell's decorative lobby stair newl post, railing and marble wainscoting, no original interior decorative features have survived. The 1949 remodeled elevator lobby retalns its Internatlonal Style design and materials except for the suspended ceiling.

7. Hardware: The few surviving samples of door hardware are simple with plaln, classical styling.

8. Mechanical Equipment:

   a. Heating: Cast-lron radiators are found throughout the building located below the windows.

   b. Lightlng: No original lighting has survived. All llght fixtures date from the 1960s to 1970s. The commercial and office spaces all are illuminated by florescent lighting fixtures.

c. Plumbing: A few water closets and lavatories have survived, most have been removed or replaced as needed. The original plans located lavatory basins in each office space. The second through fourth floors had no water closets. The fifth and sixth floors had large toilet rooms with lavatories and seven water closets located in the northeast corner of the floor. The seventh through twelfth floors had small toilet rooms in the northeast corner with urinals only.

d. Elevators: A bank of three elevators near the center of the east wall connect all floors except the thirteenth. A single, freight elevator is the northeast corner connects the sub-basement through fourth floors (Centre Venture).

D. Site: The Roosevelt Building is located on and completely fills the thirty by one hundred twenty feet lot. The Roosevelt abuts a two-story, brick, commercial building to the east. To the north, across the alley Court Street is a three-story commercial building. Across North Illinois Street is the 1985 eighteen-story Embassy Suites Hotel, replacing the Claypool Hotel which stood there from 1902 to 1969. Across West Washington Street to the south is a vacant half block area, cleared in 1989. The Occidental Building (HABS No. IN-211) stood directly south of the Roosevelt Building at the southeast corner of Washington and Illinois Streets from 1914 to 1989.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings: Blue prints of the original 1922 drawings are in the possession of the Indianapolis architectural firm of Browning, Day, Mullins, Dierdorf at 330 North Senate Avenue. The original drawings were by the Indianapolis firm of Vonnegut, Bohn, & Mueller. With the prints of the original drawings are the drawings and specifications for the remodeling of the entrance and first floor lobby dated 1948 and 1949 by Indianapolis architect Edward D. Pierre. Other drawings date from the 1950s and 1960s for the remodeling the office spaces in the upper floors.

B. Historic Views: Two photographs from the Bass Photo Collection of the Indiana Historical Society Library, Indianapolis depict general and detail views. Bass Photo #86746-F, dated May 27, 1924 depicts the new Roosevelt Building from the southwest, showing the two terra-cotta facades in the context of a bustling urban intersection. Bass Photo #244967, dated November 2, 1939 depicts the main entrance with its original revolving door and second and third floor windows with an Indianapolis Railways streetcar in the foreground.

C. Bibliography

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Centre Venture. "Building Description for Circle Centre Mall," Indianapolis, Indiana, February 8, 1988, revised July 15, 19B8 (typewritten, unpublished).

Deed Books, Marion County Recorder's Office, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1905-1990.

2. Secondary and published sources:

a. Books

Dunn, Jacob P. Indiana and Indianans. Chicago: American Historical Society, 1919.

Polk, R. L. & Company. Indianapolis City Directory. Indianapolis: R.L. Polk & Company, 1910-19B7.

Sanborn Map Company. Insurance Maps of Indianapolis, Indiana. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1914 & 1915, and 1914-15 corrected to 1954.

b. Newspapers

"Firm Buys Half Interest in Downtown Building Site." Indianapolis Star, January B, 1955.

"O. N. Mueller." Indianapolis News, November 13, 1958.

"Nineteen Large Buildings in Three Years." Indianapolis News. March 16, 1925.

"Rise in Value of Roosevelt Site Has Been Great." Indianapolis Star. February 27, 1927.

"Bernard Vonnegut Claimed by Death." Indianapolis Star. August 8, 190B.

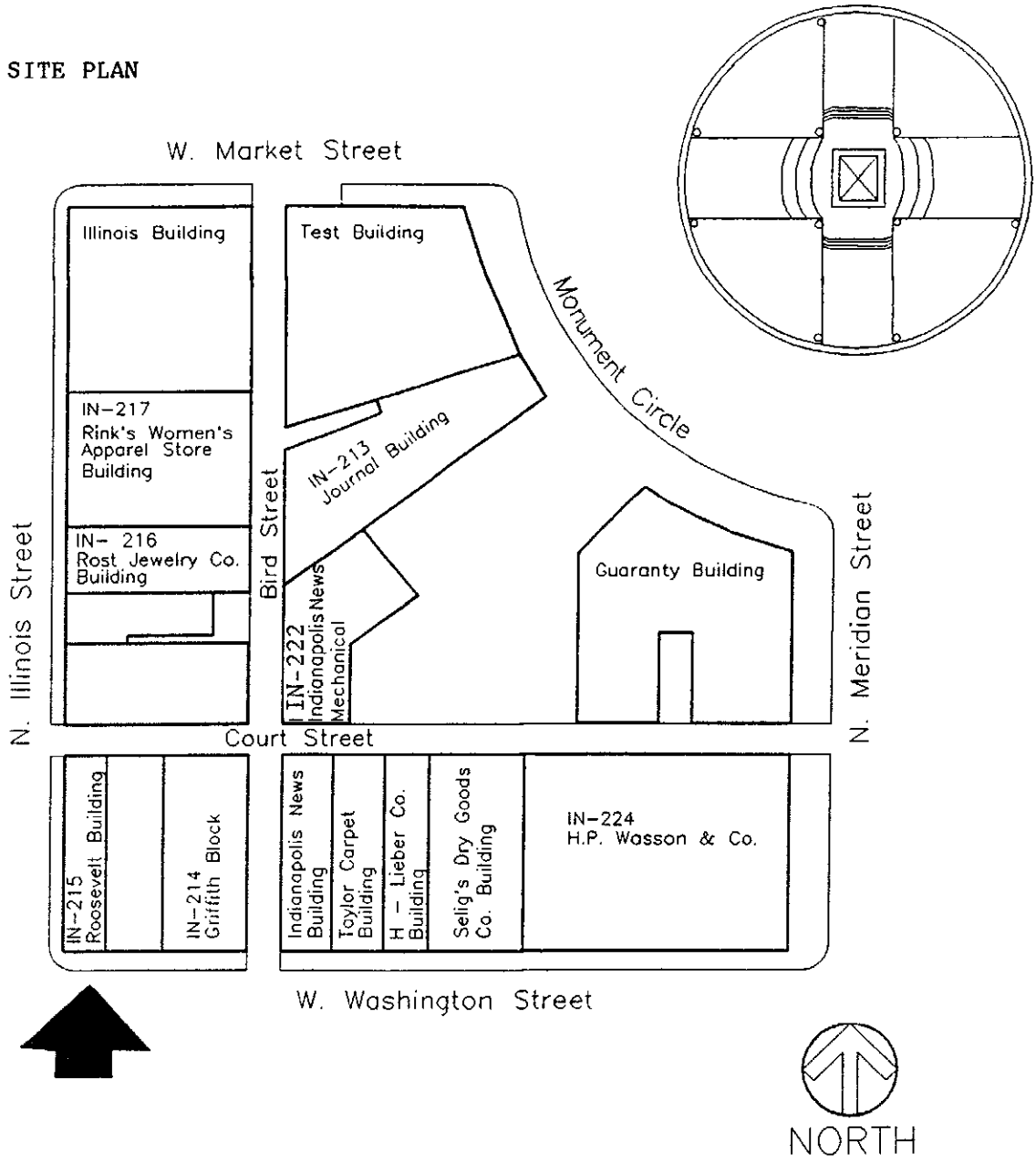
"Kurt Vonnegut, Retired Architect, Dies at 71." Indianapolis News, October 1, 1956.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Indianapolis Historic preservation Commission (IHPC) in compliance with Executive Order 11593 and a Memorandum of Agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as a mitigative effort before demolition.

Prepared by William L. Selm, Historian
Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission
May 1990

SITE PLAN



INDIANAPOLIS, IN.

CITY SQUARE 55

Indianapolis Division of Planning, 1990

FLOOR PLAN

LEGEND

1. AIR INTAKE/EXHAUST VENT
2. AIR CONDENSING UNIT
3. AIR HANDLING UNIT
4. FAN
5. MECHANICAL DUCT
6. LIQUID STORAGE TANK/WATER HEATER
7. MISC. MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT
8. INCINERATOR
9. BOILER
10. PUMPING EQUIPMENT
11. EXTENSIVE PIPING ABOVE
12. MECHANICAL CHASE
13. GAS SERVICE ENTRANCE
14. WATER SERVICE ENTRANCE
15. RESTROOM AREA
16. STOREFRONT WINDOW SYSTEM
17. COLUMN ENCLOSURE (TYP.)
18. BUILDING ELECTRICAL PANEL
19. ELECTRICAL SWITCHGEAR
20. TELEPHONE EQUIPMENT
21. ELEVATOR (PASS. OR FREIGHT)
22. DUMBWAITER ELEVATOR
23. ELEVATOR EQUIPMENT
24. LADDER
25. COOLING TOWER

5th to 11th Floor

BDMD Project No. 8311

10 0 10 20 30

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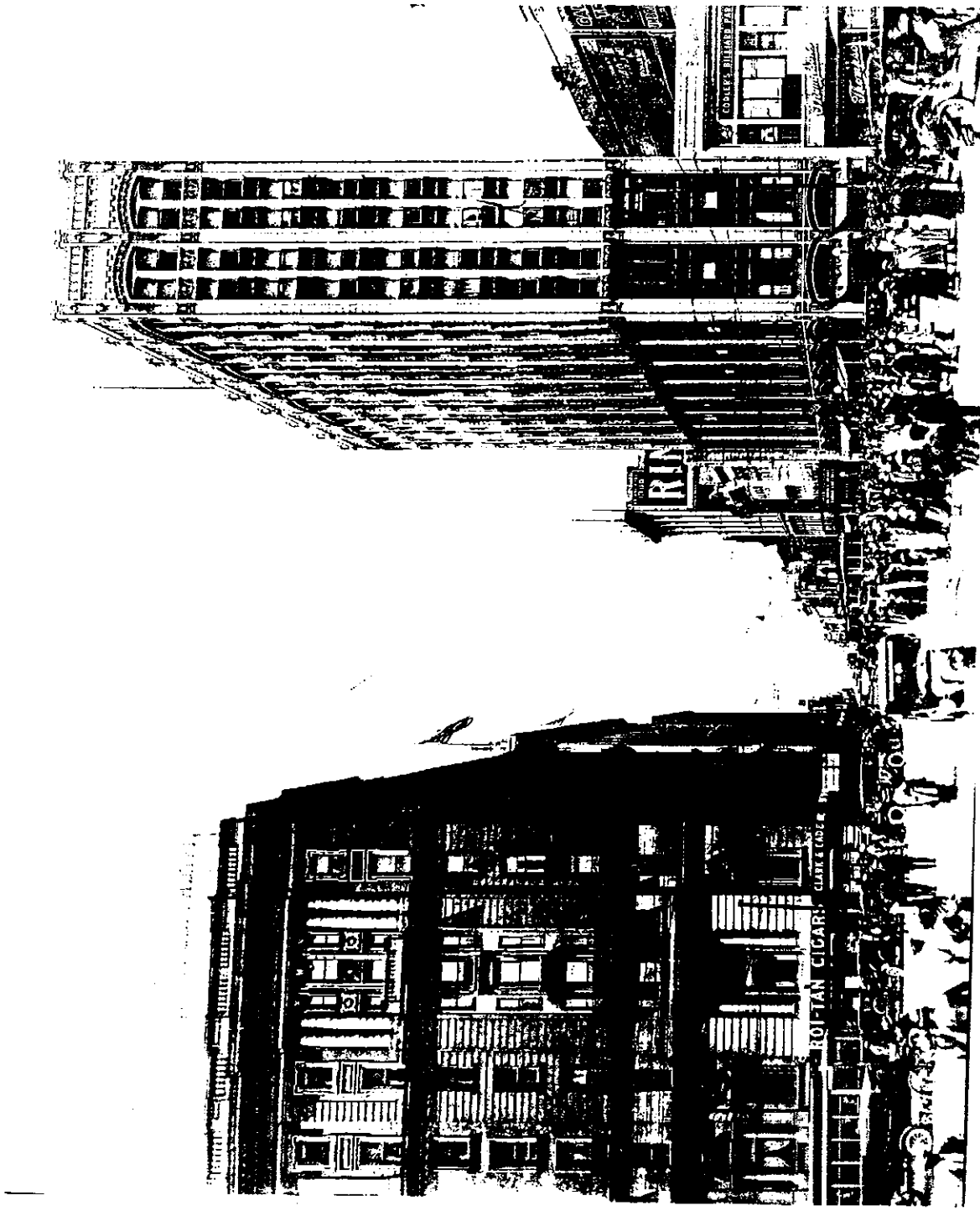
PROJECT CIRCLE CENTRE MALL
TITLE The Roosevelt Building A13
DATE: 02/08/88
SCALE as shown
DRAWN BY
A13-05
DRAWING NO.

Browning Day Mullins Dierdorf Inc. Planning · Landscape Architecture · Architecture · Interior Design
334 North Senate Ave Indianapolis, Indiana 46204 317/635-5030

Bass Photo #86746-F, May 27, 1924.
Roosevelt Building is to the right opposite the Claypool Hotel.
Indiana Historical Society Library, Indianapolis, Indiana.



Bass Photo #244967, November 2, 1939.
Roosevelt Building is in the background to the right, behind the streetcar. Indiana Historical Society Library, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Roosevelt Building, Plans of Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth & Sixth Floors, Vonnegut, Bohn & Mueller Architects, 1922. Blue prints in the possession of Browning, Day, Mullins, Dierdorf, Incorporated, 330 North Senate Avenue, Indianapolis, Indiana.